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Sunday, December 2, 2012

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Pathways- A Sojourners' Community



PATHWAYS: A Sojourners' Community

by Sarah Kim

The second cohort of PATHWAYS participants gathered together on the last weekend of October for the first course in the Level 1 program—Self and Community in Context. The retreat was facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Sarah Kim and Ms. Andrea Mai, with 11 participants from Nashville, Knoxville, and Atlanta. Over the period of two days, the group explored the notions of “self” and “community” and their contexts, which are defined by each individual’s narrative of his or her life journey.

In the end, the group created a brand-new community of fellow learners, a gathering of sojourners with like minds, concerns, and aspirations. The remarkable aspect of our time together had to do with everyone’s openness to share with honesty and enthusiasm and to listen with open hearts and compassion. We learned not only the theories about self and community, but practiced “being ourselves” and “becoming a community.” Below are the comments made by some of the participants as they reflected on their group experience:

“I want to expand my knowledge to the limit and take it and use it to the good of people like myself that has needed it, needed the help, and needed the guidance.”

“The strongest impression that has stayed with me is the sense of being in the right place at the right time with the right group of people. My mantra during our prayer times was ‘God in me, me in the world.’ I will carry this mantra with me throughout the PATHWAYS journey.”

“We were able to open up to each other and form a viable and vibrant community. It’s amazing to me that we have come to this place and time in each of our lives at exactly this moment has to be a ‘God thing.’”

“When I consider how I want to be in the world, I want to be more sensitive, compassionate, and responsive toward all people. The depth of the sharing between strangers reminded me of our commonality. It is far easier to dwell on our differences. It helped me remember that an open heart is very inviting!”

“I don’t understand how people can grow in their understanding of religion when there is no community to support and challenge them. This group, I believe, will do that.”

“I met ten people who are searching for a closer relationship with God; people who are filled with excitement for the journey, and unafraid. I met ten people who are willing to stretch their minds, to question, to doubt—to clarify.”“I love the people, and the heartwarming stories that were shared along with the laughter and tears are footprints planted in my soul. The presence of God and my classmates helped me reaffirm my calling.”

The group was much greater than the sum of its parts, I believe, because the Divine Presence was moving and working in our midst. I pray that we continue to carry this momentum of love for the community and the zeal for learning throughout our PATHWAYS experience.

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